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FURNISHING OF CITY HOUSES.

By T. M. CLARK.

NUMBER TWO—THE DINING ROOM.

MR. CLARK proposes to contribute a series of Illustrated Articles on the Furnishing and Decoration of City Dwellings, to be continued in consecutive numbers.—(Ed.)

OF all the rooms in the average American house, the dining room is apt to be the most difficult to make attractive and artistic; this being partly due, no doubt, to the unwieldy formality which generally characterizes its necessary furniture, and partly also to the ungraceful modes of arrangement which have descended to us from our Puritan ancestors, who cared only to make the operation of taking nourishment as expeditious and simple as possible. To them we probably owe the "slides," or small square holes through which the "food" is poked at the diners from some pantry beyond; and to their influence must be due the resignation with which thousands of city families submit to pass their pleasantest hours, those of the morning reunion at breakfast, and the evening rest and refreshment at dinner, in cellars below the level of the street.

If there is any way to make a basement dining room beautiful, we are ignorant of it; a slide may be closed up and plastered over, leaving the service of the room to take place through the doors; but a cellar eight feet high will remain a cellar, though decorated with all the colors of the rainbow.

Instead of a place devoted to "meals," the dining room should be the pleasantest apartment in the house, that those who use it may take in cheerfulness and contentment with their bread and butter, and avoid dyspepsia by the gentle stimulus of mental pleasure. The coloring should be rather dark, to give warmth and comfort, but the tints should be varied to suit the window surface. Where the light is scanty the woodwork may be painted dark green, and the walls painted or papered with pale lemon yellow, which will give a combination warm and solid without heaviness. If there is window surface enough to bring out richer colors, the walls may be russet brown or red, with pale sea green in the frieze or ceiling, unless the woodwork is cherry or mahogany, when the red must be in the ceiling, with olive green or blue walls. Oak is commonly regarded as the most suitable wood for dining rooms, and bears juxtaposition with almost any color; and ash or butternut are nearly as good. As a general rule, the woodwork, whether painted or not, should contrast in color with the wall surface when any richness of effect is desired. Mahogany woodwork, for instance, with a red wall, or oak or ash with a brown wall, have a heavy, muddy look.

When the expense can be afforded, nothing adds such dignity to a dining room as an ample display of wood panelling on the walls, and, if possible, on the ceiling also. The work should be substantial; not composed of a mere skin of half-inch boards or veneers, but showing thick beveled panels and solid framing; and of all materials for the purpose oak is the best. Mahogany is sometimes used, but its beautiful color becomes hot and unpleasant when spread over a whole room, without any relief. California redwood is open to the same objection. Ash and butternut answer very well, but the figure, particularly of the former, is a little obtrusive. Whitewood, or basswood, is cheap, and although it will not receive the polish of the finer woods, its color after oiling, and a years seasoning, is warm and pleasant. Even painted pine, if well treated, serves an admirable purpose. Oak, however, combines the good qualities of all other woods with some peculiar to itself. The rich, neutral tone, which it acquires by age or staining, enhances the color of nearly everything placed against it, while its bright but small figure and the exquisite polish which it receives, if well treated, adapt it to the most elaborate ornamentation as well as to the broad, smooth surface.

To secure the greatest beauty of which oak is capable, "quartered" or "slashed" stock should



FIGURE 1—A "QUARTERED" OAK BOARD.

always be chosen. This is the same material as ordinary oak, but cut in a different manner, so as to expose the "silver grain," or the medullary rays peculiar to this species, on the surface of the boards.

Wood so cut takes and keeps a better polish, and is less liable to warp and split, as well as being much handsomer and more even in color,

than the common material, so that its somewhat greater cost is well repaid in the 'ever' increasing charm of work done with it.

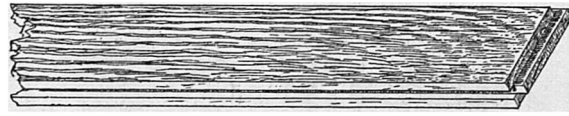


FIGURE 2—AN ORDINARY OAK BOARD.

To complete a dining room the floor should certainly be of polished wood, and such floors are extremely popular for dining rooms in general, on account of their real economy as well as their handsome appearance. For this purpose oak is generally chosen, and with reason, since no other wood is so beautiful and durable. It should, however, always be quartered, both for the sake of the silver grain, and to avoid the streaky look

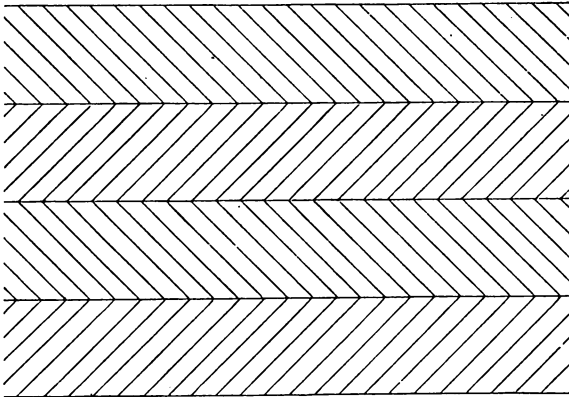


FIGURE 3—HERRING BONE FLOOR, WITH MITRED HEADING JOINTS.

which ordinary oak gives the floor. Still further to obviate this streakiness, which spoils the appearance of a floor, it is best not to lay the board in the ordinary parallel lines, but in a "herring-bone" pattern (figures 3 and 4), composed of pieces about two feet long. In this way any slight variation in the color of a board, instead of appearing in the floor as a long, obtrusive stripe, is confined to so small a surface as to be unnoticed in the general effect, which is smooth and carpet like. The herring-bone floors cost about five cents a square foot more than the ordinary kind, and are laid in two ways, one with mitred heading joints (figure 3), and the other with square heading joints (figure 4) of which the latter looks and wears much the best. Whether the floor should have an inlaid border, depends somewhat upon the general richness of decoration of the house, but in most cases one or two plain strips of oak next the walls, with herring-bone filling, give a better effect than a wider border of parquetry, which reduces the apparent size of the room materially.

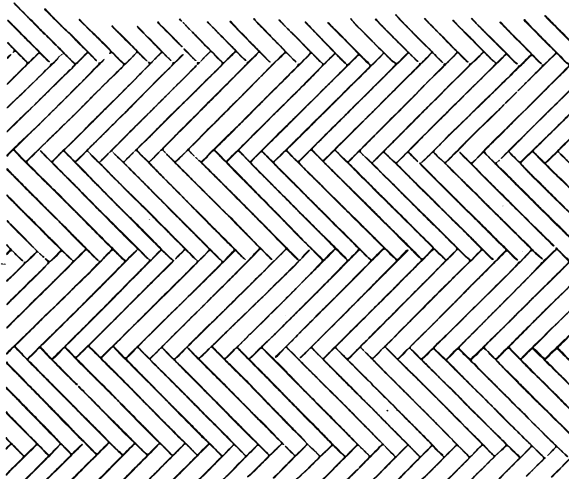


FIGURE 4—HERRING BONE FLOOR, WITH SQUARE HEADING JOINTS.

A floor of oak so laid, well filled, and finished with hard paraffin wax or patent composition, will, if the waxing is renewed once or twice a year, retain its polish for half a century, or until the boards are worn completely through. All that is necessary to renew it from week to week, if the lustre becomes dimmed by moisture or use, is a few minutes rubbing with a stiff brush.

The same dressing is often applied to "standing finish," doors and paneling of oak, and when well done is the most satisfactory mode of treatment, and the most rapidly renewed or repaired when soiled by pigeon marks or water. The composition, dissolved in turpentine to a pasty consistency, is applied with a brush or rag, and, after the turpentine has evaporated, rubbed with a cloth or a stiff bristle brush. The coating is very thin, so that there is none of that filling up of the fine lines of carved or molded work which is inevitable with varnishes.

BOSTON STYLES OF FURNISHING.

THE early fall indications are good for art and artists. A touch of cool weather has given everything a start, and the call is steady for house decorations. The higher grades lead the orders, while the same fine, fancy and perfect detail, are repeated in all grades of goods, although the orders for cheap stock are not quite as numerous as in higher priced goods of fine quality. Among the novelties are new designs in Madras lace for window drapery; the later patterns show a deeper tone of coloring, closer grouping and more exquisite detail of design; the effect of the massing of delicate color on a sheer background, gives a wonderful richness of tone. For heavier drapery the rich Turcoman is shown in a wealth of color; deep ground spaces of solid maroon and olive are bordered by rich effects of Oriental magnificence; the deep toned coloring is touched into brilliancy by the introduction of tinsel threads, that only light the colors, but are not obtrusive. Draperies for windows and portieres are very effective in the stamped plush and velvet; these goods are very delicate in treatment, and bear most exquisite shading in a varying light, the borders are finished by very deep fringe of chenille balls of two tones.

One of the most important features of the present season is, that all goods are lighter in tone than for many years; the delicate treatment of these fine shades is so perfect, that while the scale of color seems held within a limit, there is a wonderful development of character, for the lights and shades are of marvellous beauty. For upholstery use with the heavy Turcoman, there comes a fabric of delicate texture called figured velour, the surface of silken lustre bears in relief a grouping of leaves and flowers, that are shaded in fine gradations and very effective.

Interiors are following the furniture departure from the coquettish Queen Anne to the Renaissance, and we have a complete transformation in this alone. Colorings are more cheerful in all interior finish, and while light tone prevail they never approach gaudy effects. A very elaborate drawing room in light tones, shows an interior of graduated color; the walls are low toned in shades of olive bronze, the wood-work is ebonized, forming a determined outline that heightens the effect of wall spaces; the floor is covered by a carpet or rug of golden bronze tints, with pomegranate and fawn shades thrown in graceful confusion over the surface; the draperies are of pomegranate satin damask with embossed bands of silk plush and elaborate borders of tasseled fringe; draperies are mounted on ebony poles with brass rings.

Carved ebony chairs are upholstered in bright shades of plush, for use in these neutral colored rooms, where bright dashes of color prove desirable.

The stamped designs on wood are gaining in popularity; the effect of this ornamentation, which is produced by machinery, excels in many cases the effect produced by carvings, while the surface also admits of treatment in color, thus giving great variety to this line of goods. The effects produced by application of gold tints, in plain and beaten gold, are very fine; it will be noticed that in all cases a good perspective is retained.

The popularity of elaborate ornamentation, that is made to cover the entire wall space, has added another feature to the business. The carved or pressed wood is made in movable form, so that parties who desire to finish in fine and lasting manner, can retain all the distinctive features of the home, when selling or removing from one residence to another. Exquisite panels are made of three-ply veneer, that bears in relief birds and flowers, the borders are ebonized, and the entire wall space covered with these light, durable and artistic additions, while the fact that they can be removed at pleasure, makes them particularly attractive and valuable.

A new feature is embossing in relief, that can be used for wall adornment. Spanish hide is used for upholstering chairs and tables; metalized or bronze leather is also used in construction of mantels; embossed leather for antique furnishing.

In carpets, the lighter tones prevail in the lower grades and in the highest art designs, such as Morris patterns and Moresques. The plain carpets are used extensively for foundations to display handsome rugs. In English brussels the tones are bright, and the patterns show a return to the Arabesque designs, thrown over an ecru surface. The chintz colorings are becoming popular, and the Scotch Axminsters are much used, as they have a dash of color and lightness of effect that supplements bold designs in furniture and wall tones. The Wilton and English Brussels are still dark in color, while the most popular domestic goods run in light tones. The English wool-back Moquettes, are among the coming novelties; the colors will be bright, warm surface colors, with grouping of irregular and broken figures. The Woodstock rugs are popular, being a very artistic floor covering at low price. The art indications in low priced goods, point to an extensive and increasing use of art designs in the houses of people of moderate means.

In Boston, brilliant effects, to become popular, must be surrounded by low tones of colors. Designers recognize this, and the result is, that all productions are more particularly artistic than showy; there is close adherence to true art form, and beauty of outline is often preferred to bright or beautiful coloring.

The upholstery trade was never better, every firm in town is running at full speed with extra help. The goods are finer in quality and richer in color than ever before, buying is brisk, orders heavy, and particularly of the esthetic school.

Why not utilize some of the handsome papier maché ornaments, that are now being made, for furniture—bedstead panels, for example? Is there really any good argument against them?